

sunflower seed through different crop development programmes. Further, Research is in progress to fine tune the hybrid seed production technology.

Suicides vis-a-vis loans from private money lenders

245. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the reports of continuous farmers' suicides from various States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the loan with exorbitant interest rates taken from the private money lenders is one of the major causes for the distress of farmers;

(d) if so, whether Government have taken any measure to protect the farmers who are indebted to the money lenders;

(e) whether Government would declare the debts taken from the money lenders as illegal; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) The details of suicides by farmers because of agriculture-related reasons as reported by the State Governments since the year 2003, are given in the statement.

[Refer to the Statement appended to the Answer to Starred Question No. 51 (a) and (b)]

(c) and (d) Indebtness due to high rate of interest loans is one of the main reasons attributed by the State Governments for the distress of farmers. A comprehensive credit policy was announced by the Government on 18th June, 2004 containing measures for doubling of agricultural credit flow in next three years and provision of debt relief to the farmers. This, *inter alia* allowed banks to finance for redeeming the loans taken by farmers from private money lenders. In the Union Budget for the year 2006-07, it was announced that effective from Kharif 2006-07, farmers would receive crop loans upto a principal amount of Rs. 3 lakh at 7% rate of interest.

(e) and (f) No such proposal is under consideration of the Government.